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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#). Gaza Disengagement
- [2](#). London Bombings

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Key stories in the media:  
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PM Sharon's decision to seal off the Gaza Strip to non-resident Israelis through the disengagement move dominates the media, some of which report on scuffles between security forces and anti-disengagement protesters at the Kissufim crossing to the Strip. Ha'aretz reports that six IDF soldiers refused to take part in the sealing operation. Ha'aretz says that 2,000 soldiers and police have been stationed around the Strip. Maariv marks Wednesday as the starting date of the disengagement. A Hatzofe headline reads: "No Entry to Jews." Israel Radio reported that five Israelis in their twenties were arrested on suspicion of planning to block roads.

Israel Radio reported that Israeli communities inside and outside the Gaza Strip were shelled last night. There were no casualties. The radio also reported that the IDF killed an armed Palestinian in Nablus. Ha'aretz reported that during its raid in Tulkarm, the IDF found a laboratory for making explosives and some 70 kg of gunpowder. The lab was destroyed in a controlled explosion.

Jerusalem Post reported that, less than 24 hours after a senior PA security official announced that the PA was planning to crack down on Islamic Jihad for its role in Tuesday's suicide bombing in Netanya, Palestinian officials have made it clear that "only those directly linked to the attack would be punished."

Ha'aretz quoted officials from international entities involved in talks to coordinate the disengagement as saying that demolishing homes in the Gaza Strip after evacuation will entail a logistically complicated operation to remove debris. The sources are quoted as saying that the rubble will have to go to Sinai. Therefore, Egypt will determine the fate of the plan to demolish the homes and flatten the ground for rebuilding. Ha'aretz also reported that Egyptian officers will arrive in Gaza on Sunday to prepare the Palestinians for the Israeli evacuation from the Strip.

Maariv reported that over 660 members of the Likud's Central Committee have signed a petition requesting that the committee be convened to set a date for elections for the chairmanship of the party. The newspaper says that the purpose of the move's initiators is to make Binyamin Netanyahu replace Sharon.

Yediot New York correspondent Eitan Amit reports on what he says is the United States' indifference to the expansion process of the UN Security Council.

Jerusalem Post cited a viewer poll aired on Monday by CNN, according to which 94 percent of respondents are opposed to U.S. taxpayers footing the bill for Israel's pullout from Gaza; 6 percent agree to the idea.

- [1](#). Gaza Disengagement:  
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#### Summary:

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Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The decision to close the [Gaza] Strip earlier than planned was correct, and may even have saved lives."

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "It would not be an overstatement to say that the central significance [of Wednesday's closure of the Gaza Strip to non-resident Israelis] is that Israeli democracy is prepared to deal with those who want to rise up and force it to do what they want."

Editor-in-Chief Amnon Dankner and senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv: "The line must be drawn clearly and sharply: the line does not divide disengagement supporters from disengagement opponents, it divides between those who have national responsibility and those who have none."

Senior columnist Haggai Huberman wrote on page one of nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "Opponents of uprooting will have to recruit enormous forces to meet the difficult task whose definition is hard to actually utter: to defeat the IDF."

#### Block Quotes:

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#### I. "The Evacuation Has Begun"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (July 14): "The evacuation of the Gaza Strip actually began a few weeks ago, when the IDF began to evacuate military infrastructure. But from a psychological standpoint, it seems that the Prime Minister's issuance on Wednesday of a closure order for the Strip was the definitive moment.... Had it not been for the active intervention of disengagement opponents and the bear hug they gave Gush Katif residents, things would presumably have been done differently. The renewed attempts to block roads throughout the country, the fact that the ultra-Orthodox have joined the demonstrations, the enlistment of the Baba Baruch [a charismatic religious sage] in the struggle, the repeated seditious statements by some yeshiva heads -- all of these demonstrate that the decision to close the Strip earlier than planned was correct, and may even have saved lives."

#### II. "The Day Disengagement Began"

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (July 14): "The decision to close the Gaza Strip has many shades of significance, some far reaching: it would not be an overstatement to say that the central significance is that Israeli democracy is prepared to deal with those who want to rise up and force it to do what they want.... The closure order issued on Wednesday by Sharon put an end to the planned parliamentary tricks to thwart the evacuation, could stop the denial process nurtured by the hard core of Gush Katif settlers. That's it, the die has been cast. It is hard to imagine a scenario that can now prevent implementation of disengagement. A day after the disengagement is completed, Israel will declare the removal of responsibility over the Gaza Strip and the cancellation of the Civil Administration in the area. The practical significance: if the Palestinian Authority decides to implement its right of return and bring refugees into the Gaza Strip, it will be able to do so."

#### III. "Red Line for Rabbis"

Editor-in-Chief Amnon Dankner and senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv (July 14): "With criminal irresponsibility, with arrogance and a poisonous tongue, too many rabbis of the national-religious public speak evil. Their talk is mainly disproportionate. True, evacuation is a difficult matter, and true, it is right that they should warn of its possible security and political outcome.... However, in truth, when the harsh statements and hair-raising descriptions are heard, one would think that the settlers are being slaughtered.... One could also think ... that Zionism has died or been murdered by the government of Israel.... None of this talk has any basis.... Five weeks before disengagement begins, the line must be drawn clearly and sharply: the line does not divide disengagement supporters from disengagement opponents; it divides between those who have national responsibility and those who have none.... Each and every one of the citizens of Israel

is obliged today to stand on the correct side of this line. Those who prefer to stand on the other side must realize that they deserve neither understanding nor forgiveness, neither empathy and nor an embrace, only the harshest words of condemnation and a complete turning of our backs."

#### IV. "Sharon Has Turned the IDF Into the Enemy"

Senior columnist Haggai Huberman wrote on page one of nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (July 14): "The battle for Gush Katif began on Wednesday; there is no question about that.... We can win. It will be a tough battle, not a simple one, against hostile forces, against an imperious and dictatorial government. Opponents of uprooting will have to recruit enormous forces to meet the difficult task whose definition is hard to actually utter: to defeat the IDF -- to bring the Israel Defense Forces to its knees. The IDF, temporarily, the echelon of the top command, has become, because of Sharon, the 'enemy' in the service of the evil regime. It will revert to being our army again on the day that the battle is decided, either way, and we believe that it will be decided in favor of keeping the settlements."

#### 12. London Bombings:

##### Summary:

Editorial writer Avraham Tal observed in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "As someone who is now assuming the status of an international leader with designs on making peace in the Middle East, [Tony Blair] must not forget Islamic Jihad and Hamas, whose modus operandi was demonstrated last week to Britons on Bus No. 30 and the underground trains."

##### Block Quotes:

##### "A Worthy Mission For Blair"

Editorial writer Avraham Tal observed in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (July 14): "On the day it was Britain's turn to fall victim to Al-Qaida, and fears rose regarding incitement and retribution against its Muslim citizens, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that the vast majority of Muslims were decent citizens who were appalled by terror just like other citizens. This is certainly true; nevertheless, it is difficult to ignore the fact that Britain, with close to 2 million Muslim residents (around 800,000 in London itself), is a breeding ground for Al-Qaida terror, perhaps more so than any other European country.... What is truly needed to weaken Islamic terror, alongside an uncompromising war against it, is a decision by the sane majority among Muslims everywhere to denounce and rid themselves of the terrorists. But beyond the condemnations of the terror, the Islamic establishment there, as in Israel, wasn't very moved by the attacks.... Over and above his praise for the British Muslims' reservations regarding terror, Blair must openly demand that their communal leaders stand at the forefront of the struggle against the Al-Qaida criminal organization. And as someone who is now assuming the status of an international leader with designs on making peace in the Middle East, he must not forget Islamic Jihad and Hamas, whose modus operandi was demonstrated last week to Britons on Bus No. 30 and the underground trains."

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